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**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT
THE UNVEILING OF THE MONU-
MENT TO GENERAL SHERIDAN &
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1908**



**WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1908**

For Secretary, The President

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It is eminently fitting that the Nation's illustrious men, the men who loom as heroes before the eyes of our people, should be fittingly commemorated here at the National Capital, and I am glad indeed to take part in the unveiling of this statue to General Sheridan. His name will always stand high on the list of American worthies.

Not only was he a great general, but he showed his greatness with that touch of originality which we call genius. Indeed this quality of brilliance has been in one sense a disadvantage to his reputation, for it has tended to overshadow his solid ability. We tend to think of him only as the dashing cavalry leader, whereas he was in reality not only that, but also a great commander. Of course, the fact in his career most readily recognized was his mastery in the necessarily modern art of

handling masses of modern cavalry so as to give them the fullest possible effect, not only in the ordinary operations of cavalry which precede and follow a battle, but in the battle itself. But in addition he showed in the civil war that he was a first-class army commander, both as a subordinate of Grant and when in independent command. His record in the Valley campaign, and again from Five Forks to Appomattox, is one difficult to parallel in military history. After the close

of the great war, in a field where there was scant glory to be won by the general in chief, he rendered a signal service which has gone almost unnoticed; for in the tedious weary Indian wars on the Great Plains it was he who developed in thoroughgoing fashion the system of campaigning in winter, which, at the cost of bitter hardship and peril, finally broke down the banded strength of those formidable warriors, the horse Indians.

His career was typically American, for

from plain beginnings he rose to the highest military position in our land. We honor his memory itself; and moreover, as in the case of the other great commanders of his day, his career symbolizes the careers of all those men who in the years of the nation's direst need sprang to the front to risk everything, including life itself, and to spend the days of their strongest young manhood in valorous conflict for an ideal. Often we Americans are taunted with having only

a material ideal. The empty folly of the taunt is sufficiently shown by the presence here to-day of you men of the Grand Army, you the comrades of the dead general, the men who served with and under him. In all history we have no greater instance of subordination of self, of the exalting of a lofty ideal over merely material well-being among the people of a great nation, than was shown by our own people in the civil war.

And you, the men who wore the blue,

would be the first to say that this same lofty indifference to the things of the body, when compared to the things of the soul, was shown by your brothers who wore the gray. Dreadful was the suffering, dreadful the loss, of the civil war. Yet it stands alone among wars in this, that, now that the wounds are healed, the memory of the mighty deeds of valor performed on one side no less than on the other has become the common heritage of all our people in every quarter of this country.

The completeness with which this is true is shown by what is occurring here to-day.

We meet together to raise a monument to a great Union general, in the presence of many of the survivors of the Union Army; and the Secretary of War, the man at the head of the Army, who, by virtue of his office, occupies a special relation to the celebration, is himself a man who fought in the Confederate service. Few indeed have been the countries where such a conjunction would have been possible,

and blessed indeed are we that in our own beloved land it is not only possible, but seems so entirely natural as to excite no comment whatever.

There is another point in General Sheridan's career which it is good for all of us to remember. Whereas Grant, Sherman, and Thomas were of the old native American stock, the parents of Sheridan, like the parents of Farragut, were born on the other side of the water. Any one of the five was just as much a

type of the real American, of what is best in America, as the other four. We should keep steadily before our minds the fact that Americanism is a question of principle, of purpose, of idealism, of character; that it is not a matter of birthplace, or creed, or line of descent. Here in this country the representatives of many old-world races are being fused together into a new type, a type the main features of which are already determined, and were determined at the time of the Revolutionary

war; for the crucible in which all the new types are melted into one was shaped from 1776 to 1789, and our nationality was definitely fixed in all its essentials by the men of Washington's day. The strains will not continue to exist separately in this country as in the old world. They will be combined in one; and of this new type those men will best represent what is loftiest in the nation's past, what is finest in her hope for the future, who stand each solely on his worth as

a man; who scorn to do evil to others, and who refuse to submit to wrongdoing themselves; who have in them no taint of weakness; who never fear to fight when fighting is demanded by a sound and high morality, but who hope by their lives to bring ever nearer the day when justice and peace shall prevail within our own borders and in our relations with all foreign powers.

Much of the usefulness of any career must lie in the impress that it makes

upon, and the lessons that it teaches to, the generations that come after. We of this generation have our own problems to solve, and the condition of our solving them is that we shall all work together as American citizens without regard to differences of section or creed or birthplace, copying, not the divisions which so lamentably sundered our fathers one from another, but the spirit of burning devotion to duty which drove them forward, each to do the right as it was given him

to see the right, in the great years when Grant, Farragut, Sherman, Thomas, and Sheridan, when Lee and Jackson, and the Johnstons, the valiant men of the North and the valiant men of the South, fought to a finish the great civil war. They did not themselves realize, in the bitterness of the struggle, that the blood and the grim suffering marked the death throes of what was worn out, and the birth pangs of a new and more glorious national life. Mighty is the heritage which we

have received from the men of the mighty days. We, in our turn, must gird up our loins to meet the new issues with the same stern courage and resolute adherence to an ideal, which marked our fathers who belonged to the generation of the man in whose honor we commemorate this monument to-day.



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